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Message Text

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54
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

SAM-01 /063 W
---------- 019464
R 051524Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5839
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT EG
SUBJECT: SADAT MEETING WITH PRESS ESTABLISHMENT

1. PRESS REPORTING OF SADAT'S MEETING WITH TOP MEDIA REPS IN ALEXANDRIA AUGUST 4 OFFERS LITTLE CLUES AS TO TOPICS OF DISCUSSION. REPORTEDLY SADAT REAFFIRMED FREEDOM OF PRESS AND URGED "FOURTH ESTATE" TO ORGANIZE ITSELF FROM WITHIN IN ORDER BETTER TO PLAY ITS VITAL ROLE OF "DEEPING DEMOCRACY." MEETING, WHICH LASTED TWO HOURS, WAS ATTENDED BY VP, PRIMIN, FONMIN, ASU HEAD, AND ACTING MININFO.

2. COMMENT: MOST, IF NOT ALL, PARTICIPANTS ARE STILL IN ALEXANDRIA, SO WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE ON PURPOSE OF MEETING CALLED, WE UNDERSTAND, ON SADAT'S INITIATIVE. MAIN TOPIC CERTANLY ROLE OF PRESS IN ELECTION PROCESS. EDITORS IN CHIEF HAVE EXPRESSED TO US THEIR CONFUSION ABOUT PRESIDENTIAL GUIDELINES ON CAMPAIGN ISSUES. IN LAST MEETING THEY HAD WITH SADAT, PRESIDENT REFUSED TO OFFER GUIDELINES BEYOND EXPRESSING OFFICIAL VIEW THAT NO NEWSPAPER SHOULD BECOME RECOGNIZED ORGAN OF ANY OF THE THREE POLITICAL GROUPS.

3. WE EXPECT PRESIDENT SEIZED OPPORTUNITY TO REINFORCE HIS VIEW THAT RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM MEANS ATTACKS ON PUBLIC
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FIGURES FOR MALFEASANCE AND INCOMPETENCE MUST BE BACKED UP

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WITH COMPELLING EVIDENCE. INTERESTINGLY, AKHBAR CARRIED, DAY BEFORE MEETING, RENEWED ATTACK ON ASHRAF MARWAN'S QUESTIONABLE FINANCIAL DEALINGS BY EDITOR HAMMAMSI, WHO LAST MARCH WAS PUBLICLY SCORED BY SADAT FOR HIS PREVIOUS "UNDOCUMENTED" CHARGES AGAINST MARWAN.

4. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT PRESIDENT HAS DECIDED NOT RESHUFFLE TOP LEVELS OF PRESS FOR THE MOMENT. LEFTIST STAFFERS AT AHRAM, WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN NO REAL WORK TO DO FOR SOME MONTHS, WILL APPARENTLY BE LEFT IN PLACE, AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER OCTOBER ELECTIONS. LEFTIST MONTHLY AL-TALI'A CONTINUES TO ASSURE ITS READERS THAT MAGAZINE WILL NOT BE CLOSED AS RUMORMILL HAS BEEN CLAIMING FOR MANY WEEKS. AHRAM CHAIRMAN SABA' HAS, HOWEVER, TIGHTENED SCREWS ON LEFTISTS BY INSISTING THAT TALI'A'S PRINTING PRESSES BE MOVED OUT OF AHRAM BUILDING AND MAKING IT CRYSTAL CLEAR TO LEFTIST EMPLOYEES, WHO ARE BECOMING CONSIDERABLY DISSPIRITED, THAT THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD OF THEIR BY-LINES RETURNING TO AHRAM ITSELF. ONLY TALI'A AND ROSE AL-YUSUF, IT WOULD SEEM, ARE TO BE ALLOWED TO PEDDLE LEFTIST VIEWS.
MATTHEWS

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